USDA Foreign Agricultural Service
GAIN Report
Global Agriculture Information Network
Template Version 2.09

Required Report - Public distribution

Date: 7/23/2008

GAIN Report Number: E48083

EU-27

Sanitary / Phytosanitary / Food Safety

EFSA publishes two opinions on BSE testing levels in cattle

2008

Approved by:
Debra Henke
U.S. Mission to the EU

Prepared by:
Yvan Polet

Report Highlights:
On July 17, 2008, the Biological Hazards Panel (BIOHAZ) of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published two opinions on the monitoring of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle in the EU-15. Increasing the age for testing for BSE from the present 30 months to 36 or 48 months of age for slaughtered cattle would likely lead to less than one missed BSE case in cattle annually in the whole EU-15.
A Belgian question to EFSA asked what number of cases would be missed if the EU-15 stopped testing cattle born after 31/12/2003, which is 3 years after the "total feed ban" was introduced. EFSA replied that amongst those animals born in a given year in the EU-15 fewer than 6 cases would be expected to be missed.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
Brussels USEU [BE2]
[E4]

On July 17, 2008, the Biological Hazards Panel (BIOHAZ) of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published two opinions on the monitoring of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle in the EU-15[1]. Increasing the age for testing for BSE from the present 30 months to 36 or 48 months of age for slaughtered cattle would likely lead to less than one missed BSE case in cattle annually in the whole EU-15. If the age for testing increases to 60, 72 and 84 months of age, then fewer than 2, 4 and 6 BSE cases respectively could be expected to be missed. In addition, the Panel gave advice on age limits for detecting Atypical BSE[2] and any possible re-emergence of BSE in the future. However, the Panel said that it is uncertain whether the current BSE surveillance system provides reliable data on the prevalence of Atypical BSE, as there are uncertainties surrounding the sensitivity and specificity of current tests in relation to this form of BSE. In its assessment, the Panel also noted that the BSE epidemic has been constantly and significantly declining in the EU 15 since 2001. From the 10 million cattle tested for BSE in the EU-15 annually, the number of BSE cases detected fell from 2,164 in 2001 to 149 in 2007. The complete text of the opinion is available at Risk for Human and Animal Health related to the revision of the BSE Monitoring regime in some Member States[3].

A Belgian question to EFSA also asked what number of cases would be missed if the EU-15 stopped testing cattle born after 31/12/2003, which is approximately 3 years after the "total feed ban" was introduced. EFSA's BIOHAZ Panel replied that amongst those animals born in a given year in the EU-15 fewer than 6 cases would be expected to be missed. This opinion is available at Further consideration of age-related parameters on the Risk for Human and Animal Health related to the revision of the BSE Monitoring regime in some Member States[4].

These opinions would allow the European Commission (EC) to implement further steps from its TSE Roadmap[5]. Increasing the age of cattle for systematic testing for BSE at slaughter would drastically reduce the number of BSE tests performed, as the majority of beef cattle in the EU-15 would be slaughtered before they reach this age limit. That would result in significant savings for BSE monitoring. Switching BSE monitoring in cattle from the current systematic testing to a risk based approach, which is the goal behind the Belgian question, would even lead to a further decrease in BSE testing and further decreases in testing expenses. In April of 2008, the EC already amended Annex V of Regulation 999/2001[6] to allow an increase in the age for vertebral column removal in cattle from 24 to 30 months.

[1] http://www.efsa.eu.int/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902007637.htm
[2] Atypical BSE is a type of TSE which has been identified recently in cattle. It has a different prion protein make-up, making it distinct from the so-called "classical" BSE.
[3] http://www.efsa.eu.int/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902007644.htm
[4] http://www.efsa.eu.int/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902007703.htm
[5] See GAIN E35164 at http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200508/146130644.pdf
[6] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:147:0001:0040:EN:PDF

Visit our website: our website **http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/** provides a broad range of useful information on EU import rules, food laws, agriculture and trade policy. It enables easy access to USEU reports, trade and other practical information.

E-mail: AgUSEUBrussels@fas.usda.gov

Related reports from USEU Brussels with info on EU policies:

Report Number	Title	Date Released
E48025	Livestock – Semi-annual	03/10/2008
E47110	European Commission approves €187 million to fight animal diseases in 2008	12/24/2007
E47079	EU Midyear 2007 BSE update	07/13/2007
E47015	EU Community Animal Health Policy (CAHP) Strategy 2007-2013	02/27/2007
E35164	EU Directorate for Health and Consumer Protection presents its TSE Roadmap	08/23/2005
These reports can be accessed through our website http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/ or through the FAS website http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/attacherep/default.asp.		